## THE CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

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A method of facilitating conception of inventive concepts by an inventor, the method comprising any one or more of the following:

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- (a) interviewing an inventor to identify or otherwise characterize a basic invention;
- (b) facilitating conception of inventive elements using creative stimulus comprising how-type questions relating to the functioning of the invention identified in 1(a); and
- (c) iterating (b)(i) to (b)(ii).

- 2. The method of claim 1 wherein the basic invention is identified and/or characterized by accomplishing any one or more of the following steps:
  - (a) facilitating drawing of a/diagram of the basic invention;
  - (b) facilitating definition of one or more elements of the basic invention; and
  - (c) facilitating definition of problem(s) solved and/or problems to be solved by the basic invention.

3. The method of claim \( \int \) further comprising communicating to the inventors any one or more concepts selected from the group consisting of:

- (a) concept of an invention being a function of the problem to be solved by the basic invention, the element(s) that comprise the basic invention, and how the elements are connected or interrelated;
- (b) a ladder of abstraction;
- (c) prior art, novelty, nonobviousness, inventive step, and bar dates;
- (d) Inventorship; and

- (e) enablement and written description.
- The method of claim 1 further comprising documenting and/or recording output of any of 4. steps (a)-(c).

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- 5. The method of claim 1 further comprising documenting and/or recording administrative 5 information.
  - A method of "growing" a basic invention, the method comprising: 6.
    - identifying the basic invention; (a)
    - selecting a questioning theme; (b)
    - identifying an aspect of the basic invention by one or more inventors that falls (c) within the questioning theme;
    - identifying enhancements to the basic invention by the one or more inventors, (d) wherein the enhancements relate to the aspect of the invention;
    - repeating (c) (d) one or more times for alternate aspects of the basic invention (e) within a questioning theme; and
    - (f) repeating (b) - (e) one or more times for alternate questioning themes.
  - 7. The method of claim 7 wherein the alternate questioning themes comprises one or more themes selected from the group consisting of:
    - (a) disadvantages of the basic invention;
    - (b) advantages of the basic invention;
- 20 operability issue(s); (c)
  - (d) other ways to solve a same problem;
  - (e) licensing strategies; and

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- (f) identification of competitors and/or competitive products.
- 8. The method of claim 7 further comprising prior to the "growing" of the basic invention, communicating to the inventor(s) any one or more concepts selected from the group consisting of:
- 5 concept of an invention being a function of a problem to be solved by the basic (a) invention, element(s) that comprise the basic invention, and how the element(s) are connected or interrelated;
  - (b) a ladder of abstraction;
  - prior art, novelty, nonobviousness, inventive step, and bar dates; (c)
- 10 (d) inventorship; and

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- enablement and written description. (e)
- 9. The method of claim 7 further comprising documenting and/or recording output of any of steps (a)-(f).
- The method of claim 7 further comprising documenting and/or recording administrative 10. 15 information.
  - 11. A method of facilitating conception of inventive concepts by an inventor, the method comprising any one or more of the following:
    - communicating to the inventors concepts selected from the group consisting of: (a)
    - (i) concept of an invention being a function of a problem to be solved by the basic invention, element(s) that comprise the basic invention, and how the element(s) are connected or interrelated;
      - a ladder of abstraction; (ii)
      - prior art, novelty, nonobviousness, inventive step, and bar dates; (iii)

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- (iv) inventorship; and
- enablement and written description; (v)
- (b) defining detail of the basic invention the defining detail of the basic invention comprises any one or more of the following:
  - (i) interviewing an inventor to identify or otherwise characterize a basic invention;
  - (ii) facilitating conception of inventive elements using creative stimulus comprising how-type questions relating to the functioning of the invention identified in (b)(i); and
  - (iii) repeating (b)(i) to (b)(ii);
- growing the basic invention by a method comprising any one or more of the (c) following steps:
  - identifying the basic invention; (i)
  - (ii) selecting a questioning theme;
  - (iii) identifying an aspect of the basic invention that falls within the questioning theme;
  - (iv) identifying enhancements to the basic invention by the inventor(s), wherein the enhancements relate to the aspect of the invention;
  - (v) repeating (c)(iii) – (c)(iv) one or more times for alternate aspects of the basic invention a questioning theme; and
  - repeating (c)(ii) (c)(v) one or more times for alternate questioning (vi) themes;
- (d) documenting and/or recording output of any of steps (b)(i)-(b)(iii) and (c)(i)-(c)(vi); and

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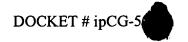
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- (e) documenting and/or recording administrative information.
- 12. The method of claim 13 wherein the alternate questioning themes comprise one or more themes selected from the group consisting of:
  - (a) disadvantages of the basic invention;
- 5 (b) advantages of the basic invention;
  - (c) operability issues;
  - (d) other ways to solve a same problem;
  - (e) licensing strategies; and
  - (f) identification of competitors and/or competitive products.